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8 September 1985***Recruiters Draw More Than 150,000 Applicants a Year***

Demand for CIA Jobs Is Not a Well-Kept Secret

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WASHINGTON—On a recent morning a roomful of clean-cut young men and women waited for their first interview in an elaborate and highly competitive job application process that probes intimate details of their lives, inspects their friends and neighbors and requires them to pass a lie-detector test.

If successful—and few are—the applicants are tapped for a well-paying entry-level job with a secret organization that promises a "career of consequence."

They were among the 150,000 to 200,000 applicants a year for jobs with the CIA, according to Herbert Simmons, chief of agency recruitment in the Washington area.

Drive Nationwide

Many were responding to a nationwide CIA advertising campaign in leading newspapers. Others had been approached by CIA recruiters on college campuses.

A spokesman for the Central Intelligence Agency refused to say how many people the agency hires a year because that information would indicate the size of its work force. The application process is known to be highly competitive, because of both high academic standards and the rigorous security checks.

Ten years ago, when the sins of the CIA were being hauled before congressional investigators, any agency recruiters spotted would probably have been besieged by student militants. Surprisingly, recruiting continued briskly even during those dark days.

Now, CIA Director William J. Casey told a gathering of former intelligence officers last winter, "despite a drumbeat of media criticism," the agency had more than 150,000 applicants over the previous year.

The CIA, whose work force at its headquarters in Langley, Va., and in the Washington area is estimated at about 25,000, is looking for the cream of the crop in college graduates, men or women, Simmons said. Applicants must be U.S. citizens.

Selection 'Very Careful'

"During the coming semester we'll be visiting schools and colleges throughout the nation. But we remain very careful in our selection because we're talking about a secret and unique agency," Simmons said.

The screening process is rigorous and can be protracted.

"We're shooting for a 120-day average security check period," he said, and recruiters are even approaching juniors in college to start the process earlier.

The personal history questionnaires are formidable and zoom in on possible criminal records, drug and alcohol use—although past experiments or experiences do not automatically rule out an applicant.

Relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers, teachers, are interrogated in-depth in field checks. References are double checked and health records verified.

If all goes well, the applicant is called in for a lie detector test.

The CIA does not come right out and advertise specifically for spies.

Disciplines Number 150

"It's a big agency, and people don't know about the various branches," Simmons said. "We have 150 disciplines calling for state-of-the-art professionals."

The CIA has four main departments or directorates, only one of which is directly concerned with "humint" or human-obtained and human-generated intelligence, including covert actions. It is the directorate of operations, also known as the clandestine services.

This is the branch which, in addition to carrying out espionage and recruiting foreign agents, would also be responsible, as the CIA charter explains, for performing "such other functions and duties related to intelligence affecting the national security as the National Security Council may from time to time direct."

Critics charged that the vague wording was too loosely interpreted by the CIA and led to its troubles in the 1970s with the exposure of past "dirty tricks" and assassination plots, which investigation showed had either misfired or were never carried out.

Assassination Outlawed

Assassination is now specifically outlawed as a CIA tool. However, David Atlee Phillips, a veteran of 20 years' service in the CIA's clandestine services, notes, "Things might be different in wartime."

The CIA's other branches—the directorates of intelligence, administration, and science and technology—utilize all areas of academia.

Within the branches, employees conduct political and economic research; arms, balance of power and strategic assessments; space, environmental, demographic, agricultural, oceanographic, mineral, geographic and cartographic research; imagery and photographic analysis from satellite, aerial, ground and sea reconnaissance, and work in such fields as computer sciences, communications, medicine, psychology, foreign languages, small arms and survival training.

Phillips, in his unofficial 1985 book on intelligence jobs, "Careers in Secret Operations: How to Be a Federal Intelligence Officer," provides a look at some of the applicants' potential questions and the agency's responses:

Q. I've been on drugs. Will I be hired?

A. It depends on the narcotic used, the frequency of use and how recently you were into it. If you are hired by the CIA or FBI, be ready to give up all narcotics.

Q. I'm gay. Does it matter?

A. Yes. U.S. intelligence agencies and departments do not hire known homosexuals. Homosexuals continue to be considered security risks in most intelligence agencies and are not hired if homosexual tendencies are spotted during security reviews.

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